

**TULARE COUNTY WATER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 12, 2014**

Members Present:

Allen Ishida, Board Representative and Chairman
Mike Ennis, Board Alternate Representative
Paul Boyer, District 1 Appointee
Mark Larsen, District 3 Appointee
Chris Kapheim, District 4 Appointee
Richard L. Schafer, District 5 Appointee
Dennis Keller, At-Large Appointee

Members Absent:

Susana De Anda, At-Large Appointee
Rudy Mendoza, TCAG Representative
Dale Brogan, District 2 Appointee

Staff Present:

Julieta Martinez, Tulare County Board of Supervisors
Will Jackson, County Counsel

Members of the Public who voluntarily provided their names on the attendance sheet:

Carole Clum
Pat Pinkham
Shane Smith
Michael Tharp
Michael Hickey
Richard Garcia
Kim Loeb
Steve Stadler

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:02pm.

2. Public Comment Period

Carol Clum of Three Rivers provided the Commissioners with a handout from the Financial Times dated April 11, 2014. Please see attachment for comments.

Patrick Pinkham, resident at 400 Road 188 of Exeter, related to the Commission that he did not feel that groundwater management was being addressed appropriately or not being addressed at all. He stated that it has now become a focal point because of the drought. Without ditches running, people will now need to pump more ground water. He stated that in his own opinion, he feels time is running out and if the County or Commission has not addressed groundwater management he hope the state will.

Commissioner Schafer responded by sharing that all of Tulare County is covered by groundwater management plans to some degree covered under AB 3030 and SB 1938. There has been a lot of groundwater management planning that has been going on in accordance with the legislative acts. He stated that if a person is not involved it is possible not to know that there is considerable groundwater management planning by public districts and by Joint Powers agencies made up of several public district.

Commission Keller stated that it is critical to note that prior to recent history, with the allocations of surface water have been curtailed, the Kaweah Basin was within 35,000 acre/feet of being within total balance which is a laudable goal given that it's a third of a million acres and the number of acre/feet that are pumped from the groundwater even in a normal surface allocation year. The exacerbation of the current groundwater conditions are because number one drought and other projects. Forty two years ago the Bureau of reclamation was trying to market almost 13.1 million acre/feet of CVP yield that they declared they had available to market. They marketed 123,800 acre/feet of that water and haven't marketed another drop since and now we have a zero allocation this year. The failure of the projects to do what they were designed to do even in a normal year is what is leading to conditions as we are seeing now that are causing Sacramento to say we need to provide greater control over this issue. It is unfair to say nothing has been happening because it has. What hasn't happened is that the word about what the Conservation District does or Alta Irrigation District does on a normal year does not get out to even the growers, that poses the problem.

Commissioner Kapheim stated more wells are being drilled and they are drilling deeper causing more impacts over time. There's a timing issue, we've looked at this issue for many years and worked on it. I don't know what legislation will end up this year. We've never have the number of wells we have now.

Patrick Pinkham shared that a person can still drill a well and that creates a problem. All that is being done is that people continue to put straws in the ground. Discussion followed.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 14, 2014 meeting

Staff received additional corrections of the minutes from Commissioner Schafer and with those corrections; Motion was made by Commissioner Schafer to accept corrected minutes, second by Commissioner Kapheim. Motion Approved.

4. Presentation by David Cehrs on Groundwater Recharge

David Cehrs has a PHD in hydrology, he is a registered geologist, and a certified hydro-geologist in the state of California. He gave a presentation on Groundwater Recharge and the Fresno Recharge Well System. He referred to it as a management tool. He discussed some of the types or recharge like surface spreading, near surface, recharge wells, and spreading on farmland. He touched upon typical recharge basins. Examples are the purchase of land, building dikes & levees, pond infrastructure, and security. He shared that no matter what type of recharge is done, it can be done at a third the cost of dams. It is very cost effective and rather rapid.

Commissioner Kapheim asked Mr. Cehrs how he mitigated the chemicals from the recharged water.

Mr. Cehrs shared that when the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys were natural systems, there was rainfall and surface water recharging, percolating through the soils, and groundwater exited via the San Francisco Bay, there was a salt equilibrium. Today we no longer have a salt sink. Groundwater is not heading out to the bay like it used to so we don't have a salt sink for the groundwater. The question becomes if we are trying to preserve soil from salinization, groundwater from increasing pollutants? Are we trying to save both or neither? The first answer is if we are trying to save both, it cannot be done right now unless there was a lot of funding. What it comes down to is if we are trying to save the soil or groundwater. We will end up sacrificing soil profile which will make it very hard to recharge because recharge by its very nature is going to carry those pollutants to the groundwater. If we save the soil and sacrifice groundwater, we then flush material through the soil profile and have it headed for the groundwater. The Regional Board says no at the moment. To him we are in a conundrum in a degrading system. His first personal inkling is that it is probably easier to clean up groundwater than it is to clean up soil. To answer Commissioner Kapheim, he does not think it is possible to recharge, without carrying pollutants, agricultural or municipal, to groundwater pollutants. Discussion followed.

5. Discussion on assistance for private domestic wells

Chairman Ishida shared that at this time there is no assistance for private wells. The County does not have the capacity to address these wells.

Commissioner Schafer commented that an individual might be better off to move into a city if they have a dry well.

Commissioner Boyer shared that Self Help is putting in an application in the amount of \$100,000 for loans for private wells. The maximum loan is for \$11,000. It won't necessarily complete the job but it is for several County areas.

Chairman Ishida stated that the specific question of monetary assistance for private well owners was addressed to the Governor's Drought Task Force but the only response was that they are looking into it.

Commissioner Kapheim stated that they had 66 ranches where the wells collapsed. Things happened to the wells in 1992. They were fortunate that they used neighbors wells. The problem now, when a well collapses is getting a new well drilled.

Maria Herrera, Community Water Center, thanked the Commission for putting this item on the agenda. She shared this is an item they have been emailing supervisors on. She welcomed the opportunity to work with the County to better assist the people being hit hardest with the drought. She asked the Commission to potentially give some direction to County staff to work with them more formally on addressing the drought. She asked to look into other funding possibilities such as the Supervisors' good works funding.

Chairman Ishida shared that good works money is difficult to have an impact because it is limited to \$110,000 total and given in small amounts. He stated that the Office of Emergency Services can assist with bottled water but it's still not livable.

Maria Herrera stated that it would be great to have one meeting with a representative from the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Department and the Office of Emergency Services to see what options are out there. She does not want to miss any opportunities.

Chairman Ishida stated that there will be a meeting set up with Staff and Ms. Herrera.

6. Update on Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantage Community Water Study

Commissioner Keller stated that the Management Pilot finished its second round of PSAG meetings. In addition to that that they have started working on the heavyweight part of policy recommendations. There will be a special Stakeholder Oversight Advisory Committee meeting oriented towards that topic this month.

Maria Herrera shared that there is a meeting in the Board of Supervisors conference room on Monday, May 19 at 4:30pm. She stated that on the County website there are two draft reports for review of the public.
Subcommittee Reports

None at this time.

7. Staff Reports

None at this time.

8. Commissioners Comments

Commissioner Kapheim shared that they are finishing their study on the Cutler area for drinking water this month. He knows the governor's office is interested in getting this type of project into action. The struggle is the funding and governance, they will take a while. He also mentioned that the groundwater table is going to drop and they are not quite sure what's going to happen because of the pumping on the east side

that typically isn't there other years. Long term we need to get these communities on a surface water supply and quit pumping groundwater to the extent they are now.

Commissioner Schafer commended the Board of Supervisors and particularly Supervisor Ennis for bringing the Success Reservoir Enlargement Project to the attention of the Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Chairman Ishida stated that Supervisor Ennis and he met with the Governor's Drought Task Force earlier this morning. He believed this was the fifth or sixth meeting they've had throughout the state. It was an interesting meeting but it was difficult to get across to them that if the County loses the citrus especially in Terra Bella it will be difficult to return to the production level we are at today, most likely it would take more than six years. He brought up the term migrant farm workers because that's what we are going to see. People will move out of the area to find work and this has a direct impact on our education system due to the absence of their children. Discussion followed.

9. Next meeting – Monday, June 9, 2014, 3:00 p.m. – Board of Supervisors Chambers

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:22pm.